

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

No. 190. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, JULY 20, 1872.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

THE YELLOW FLAG.

By EDMUND YATES,

AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP," "NOBODY'S FORTUNE," &c. &c.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER II. A CONFIDENTIAL MISSION.

DURING the time that It was lying in the unused second-floor room awaiting its last dismal journey to Kensal Green, Martin Gurwood kept the story which had been told him locked in his own breast. Once or twice he saw Doctor Haughton, who had managed to set aside the impending inquest, and to him Martin spoke, hoping that either he or Mr. Broadbent might suggest the advisability of their communicating with the tenant of the cottage at Hendon, and letting her know what had occurred. But on this subject the astute physician was singularly reserved; and whenever there was any approach to it he invariably turned the current of the conversation. It was a shy subject, he thought, and one in which grave men in his position should not be mixed up. They were men of the world, of course, and knew that such things were; but both for professional and private reasons it was best to ignore them as much as possible.

So Martin Gurwood, left entirely to his own resources, almost gave himself up to despair. He felt that it would be impossible much longer to conceal the truth from Mrs. Calverley, but he knew that before mentioning it to her, he ought to possess himself of the details of the story, and these he could not learn without a personal visit to Hendon. Then, too, it was more than probable that this young woman, the dead man's mistress, was even

yet ignorant of his fate, and out of mere Christian charity she ought to be made acquainted with it. Martin Gurwood did not know what to do. His worldly knowledge was small; such of it as he possessed had been acquired at Oxford, and immediately after leaving the university, and it had grown dull and rusty in his subsequent curacies and in the Lullington vicarage. If he had only a friend, a clear-headed, far-seeing man of experience, to whom he could intrust the secret, and on whose judgment he could rely! Suddenly a bright thought occurred to him—Humphrey Statham—there was the very man. Sound, single-hearted, and worldly-wise! Martin had known him off and on for many years, and not merely in his own experience of him, which was small, had found in him all the qualities he had named, but had heard him accredited with them by others whose relations with Statham had been more intimate. He would go down into the City the very next day, and hunt him out. And Martin Gurwood went to bed that night with a sense of relief at his heart.

The month on board the Scilly pilot-boat had done Humphrey Statham an immense deal of good. Mr. Collins had carefully avoided troubling his master with any letters or papers, though even if they had been forwarded it is doubtful whether they would have reached their destination, as the season had been very stormy, and the pilot's services in constant requisition. Mr. Statham's spirits rose with the wind and the storm. Knowing the sea-going qualities of the boat beneath him, he was never so happy as when knocking about in heavy gales and foam-crested rollers. He had had a remarkably happy holiday, and had come back with renewed health and fresh vigour for business.

On the second morning after his return he was seated at his desk looking over some special papers which the vigilant Collins had placed before him, when that discreet functionary presented himself at the door.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," he said; "says his business is pressing. Here is his card."

Mr. Statham took up the card, and glanced at it. "The Reverend Martin Gurwood," he cried; "show him in at once. Why did you hesitate?"

"Beg your pardon, Mr. Statham, but these matters," pointing to the papers on which Humphrey had been engaged, "are important. Been bottled up for a fortnight, and won't keep any longer. Norland and Company, owners of the brig Samson, found derelict off Cuxhaven, are coming to see you at two; and Captain Thompson, of the barque Susquehanna, run into in the fog of the ninth instant off Dungeness, has been here three times, and gets more and more impatient each visit."

"Captain Thompson's patience must be yet further tried, I am afraid, Collins, and Messrs. Norland must wait my leisure," said Humphrey Statham. "Show Mr. Gurwood in at once, and don't let me be disturbed while he is with me."

Mr. Collins bowed with a deprecatory shrug of the shoulders and retired, speedily returning and ushering the visitor into his master's presence.

"My dear Gurwood," cried Humphrey, as soon as they were alone, "this is an unexpected pleasure! What an age it is since I have seen you. I am so glad I am in town; I only returned the day before yesterday."

"Your trip, whatever it has been, seems to have done you good," said Martin. "How strong and well you are looking."

"I have been in a pilot-boat for the last three weeks—you know my old luns—and had all the London dust blown out of me by strong gales and washed off me by running seas. I wish I could return the compliment, my dear fellow," added Statham, "but I'm sorry to see you doing no credit to Lullington air. You look as pallid and as sodden as any Londoner, Gurwood. What's the matter with you, man?"

"I have had a good deal of mental worry within the last few days, and I suppose I am showing its effects," said Martin. "It is this which has brought me to see you, to ask for any advice and assistance you can give me."

"Sorry for the cause, but delighted to be of any use in my power," said Statham. "Is it in my line of business? Any of your step-father's argosies run down and wrecked on their homeward voyage? By the way, a thousand pardons! What an idiot I am! I now remember to have seen in the Times a paragraph announcing Mr. Calverley's sudden death."

"It is in connexion with that event that I have come to you. You are a man of the world, I know, and a thorough good fellow into the bargain, while in all matters requiring tact and decision I am lamentably deficient."

"Merely the manner of bringing up, my good friend," said Humphrey Statham. "I am practical and hard-headed: you are theoretical and large-hearted. What the wine-merchants call a 'blending' of the qualities of both of us would make, I suppose, the right sort of fellow. Now, then, what has gone wrong? Mr. Calverley has died intestate, I suppose, or there is some hitch about the disposition of his property."

"No, so far all is right. The will, made about two years ago, is clear, concise, and properly attested. I am joined in the executorship with Mrs. Calverley, and so far all is plain sailing. Besides, I have been mixed up with so many of my parishioners in such matters that I should scarcely have needed advice. What I have come about is a much more serious affair."

"Out with it, then, man, and don't have any further hesitation. You won't be able to astonish me. All sorts of wonderful things have been told me by people sitting in that chair. The last person who occupied it before I went away was a detective officer, and your story cannot be more strange than his, or more pathetically interesting—to me at least." But the last words were almost inaudible.

"You must let me say what I have to say in my own way, then," said Martin Gurwood, "and try and follow me as best you can. It was given out that Mr. Calverley died in a railway carriage. This was not the case. He died in a fit on the high road to Hendon, and was found there by a London physician who knew him, and who happened to be passing in his carriage."

"Hendon?" repeated Humphrey Statham. "What have I heard about Hendon lately?"

"It is a place which has a great deal to do with the story I am about to relate,"

said Martin, "as you will judge when I tell you that the late Mr. Calverley, unknown to his wife or to any of us, had a house there."

Humphrey Statham looked up sharply; then whistled long and low.

"A house to which he was in the habit of retiring every other fortnight or so, giving out and leaving it to be imagined that he had gone down to some ironworks which he had purchased in the North, and which required his frequent supervision."

"Yes," said Statham, nodding his head composedly, "I quite understand. Of course at this country residence he didn't pass in his own name?"

"How in the world could you have guessed that?" said Martin, astonished.

"You are right, however. It seems that at Hendon he was known as Mr. Claxton."

"Claxton!" cried Humphrey. "Good Heavens! what an extraordinary thing." Then, checking himself, he repeated, "Yes, known as Mr. Claxton?"

"The name seems familiar to you; it is, I suppose, not an uncommon one?" said Martin. "However, by it he was known."

"Yes," said Humphrey Statham, absently. His thoughts were far away then, intent on Tatlow's story about Emily Mitchell's child and the lady who had adopted her. "Yes," he repeated, recalling his attention by an effort, "I think I can see my way to some very awkward details. The man who passed as Claxton was not alone at this retreat?"

"He was not," said Martin, looking uncomfortable. "The cottage had, as I am informed, a young woman for its permanent mistress."

"Exactly," said Statham, "as might have been anticipated."

"Good Heavens!" cried Martin, in his turn, "are such things so common that you take the revelation thus calmly? When this news was told to me I was staggered beyond belief."

"Perfectly natural in your case, my dear Gurwood," said Humphrey Statham, who had resumed his old bearing and manner; "had it been otherwise, you would not have been fitted for the position you occupy. What you and other men call 'knowledge of the world,' with which you are pleased to accredit me, means an experience of the worst side of human nature, laughed at, and glossed over by the thoughtless, but often horrible in its

abandonment and profligacy. Such knowledge is hardly earned, and, to a man of any refinement and decent feeling, is eminently unsatisfactory in its results; but it is what we most of us have to go through, and in such matters it is of no use being squeamish! Well! Mr. Calverley was known as Mr. Claxton in his Hendon home, which he shared with a young woman. Has Mrs. Calverley been made acquainted with this story?"

"No; nor do I know how it is to be broken to her; that is one point on which I have to consult you. More than this, the—the person in question is, so far as I can make out, as yet unaware of what has transpired—I mean of Mr. Calverley's death."

"The dence she is! Has no one been to see her?"

"No one at all. The whole thing transpired in a very odd manner. It appears that the Hendon apothecary happened to be in the carriage with the London physician, of whom I have spoken, and recognised the dead man as his acquaintance, Mr. Claxton."

"Then he was, of course, the very man of all others to tell this woman what had happened."

"So I thought, and hinted as much as strongly as I dared! But he declined to take the hint, nor would his companion, Doctor Haughton, the physician, help me out in my suggestion."

"This is very awkward," said Humphrey Statham, after a pause. "You see your great object must naturally be to keep the story of this disgraceful connexion from Mrs. Calverley's ears. She will have worry enough of her own, poor woman, without having her feelings harrowed by the discovery of her husband's baseness."

"Yes," said Martin Gurwood, but he spoke faintly. Knowing his mother as he did, he felt it impossible to indorse his friend's ideal description of her state.

"Well, it seems to me more than probable that in a very short time this young woman of whom we have been speaking, believing as I think you said she did, that the soi-disant Mr. Claxton was a partner in Calverley's firm, will be sending down to the house of business in the City to inquire what has become of him. If she does that she would at once discover the true state of affairs, and then, if she be like the rest of her class, a row-royal will ensue."

"What do you mean?" asked Martin

Gurwood, in alarm. "What do you think she will do?"

"My good fellow, she will do everything she possibly can to make the best bargain for herself. Persons in her position generally imagine that this is best effected by creating a disturbance, and rendering themselves as obnoxious as possible. It is probable, therefore, that this woman will turn all her energies on to Mrs. Calverley, beginning by explaining to her the position, and proceeding to extort money."

"I should scarcely think she would be able to do that where my mother is concerned," said Martin Gurwood, finding it impossible to restrain a grim smile. "Mrs. Calverley throughout her life has been a thorough woman of business, and would be quite able to hold her own in any matter of that kind. But it is most advisable that the recent state of affairs should be kept from her as long as possible, and that, when it is found necessary to disclose them, the story should be told with all possible delicacy."

"Exactly; and with that feeling we musn't leave it to the young person at Hendon to do."

"Of course not," said Martin Gurwood. "I really am distressed beyond measure. I have no notion what ought to be done, or who should do it."

Humphrey Statham rose from his seat, plunged his hands into his trousers-pockets, and took two or three short sharp turns up and down the room. Then he stopped in front of Martin Gurwood's chair, and said:

"I'll tell you what it is; this matter will have to be faced out sooner or later, and it is better that it should be done at once. For your mother's sake, and for your own, it is necessary that there should be as little scandal as possible, and, so far as I can see, the only way to avoid an exposé is for some one to go up to Hendon and see this young woman."

"Yes," assented Martin Gurwood, dolefully. "What a very unpleasant task!"

"This must be done at once, before she gets an inkling of what has occurred, or else, as I say, she will be coming down to the City, and thence to Mrs. Calverley, and all our plans will be upset. Now, whoever sees her must tell her exactly what has happened, and— By-the-way, the will has been found, you say, and you have seen it?"

"Certainly. I am one of the executors."

"And there is no provision made for— for Hendon in the will?"

"None at all; there is no mention of, or allusion to, the subject."

"So much the better," said Humphrey Statham. "Men are so essentially selfish that, no matter what extravagance they may commit for those people during their life-time, they seldom leave them anything at their death. If, however, they have any kind of feeling about them, they usually make some separate provision while they are alive, and do not risk the chance of having their memories mocked at by any testamentary acknowledgment of their frailties. Of course you know nothing of any settlement having been made by Mr. Calverley during his life?"

"Nothing at all; neither the business nor the private accounts have yet been looked into."

"I should say most likely nothing was done in that way. Mr. Calverley was not an old man, and up to the time of his death had not been ailing. He probably expected to live on for many years, and even if he intended to provide for this young person, did not see any necessity for doing so at present. If this be the case, it is so far in our favour. We have something to gain from this young woman—her silence—and it must be purchased."

"Yes," said Martin Gurwood; "I see the necessity for that, and I dare say it could be managed. It will be necessary to take Jeffreys, the chief clerk, into confidence, as he will have the preparation of the accounts."

"Limited confidence to Jeffreys is not objectionable," said Mr. Statham. "Very well, then; this person can be told that so long as she conducts herself properly, and keeps her mouth shut in regard to her life at Hendon, she will receive a certain annuity, the amount of which can be determined upon hereafter. It'll stand you in, I should say, from a hundred to a couple of hundred a year, but you must get Mr. Jeffreys to arrange that for her, and if she holds to her share of the bargain, you may consider yourself well out of what might have been a very disagreeable affair."

"I think so too, and I am very much obliged to you for the advice. But there is one point on which I am as much in the dark as ever."

"And that is——?"

"Who am I to get to go to Hendon to transact this business? Of course I should be very unwilling to go myself; but even

if I could overcome my repugnance, I doubt whether I should be of the smallest use."

"I am perfectly sure you would not; and even if you were likely to succeed, you must not be sent on a mission to make terms with a woman of this class. No; they say that if you want anything properly done you must do it yourself, and as I was the originator of this proposition, I suppose I must take upon myself to be its executant."

"Do you mean to say you will take upon yourself to go to Hendon and do all this for me?"

"I suppose I must."

"You are the best fellow in the world," said Martin Gurwood, shaking his friend heartily by the hand.

"No," said Statham, "I am very far from that. But I have wandered here and there, and seen men and cities—and women, too, for that matter—and, I dare say, I shall do this better than any of your acquaintance. So consider the matter settled, and leave it to me."

"When will you go to Hendon?"

"To-morrow, and I will see you on the day following. Come here about this time and you shall learn the result of my mission."

"I will do so. I never can be sufficiently grateful to you, Statham, for the kindness you have shown me in this matter." And Martin Gurwood took leave of his friend in a much more comfortable frame of mind than when he arrived that morning in Change-alley.

When Humphrey Statham was left by himself he remained perfectly quiet for a few minutes; then he rose from his chair, and resuming his quarter-deck-like patrolling of the room, plunged into thought, which found expression in the following words:

"This is certainly a most extraordinary complication of affairs! To think that Emily Mitchell's child should have been adopted by a woman who proves to be Mr. Calverley's mistress! The stigma of sin and shame seems to cling to the poor little wretch most tenaciously. However, it must be my business to put an end to that connexion as speedily as possible, and I do not suppose there will be much difficulty. The child was all very well as an amusement, but now that the supplies are cut off, or, at all events, very much reduced, I should think madam would be only too glad to be rid of the encumbrance. Fancy such an affair as this happening with that

remarkably respectable and quiet-looking old gentleman, Mr. Calverley! And having been carried on for several years, too, without any one being one bit the wiser. Not a bad notion that, calling himself Claxton, and giving out that he was a sleeping partner with Calverley and Company, which would account for his being seen to go in there, and being recognised by the clerks and porters if any one had thought it worth while to watch him from Hendon to the City. What a world it is! What a world of lies and swindling, dishonour and deceit! And here is Martin Gurwood creeping about round the edge of it, and knowing no more of what goes on within than a fly on a clock-face knows of the movement of the works! He would have made a nice mess of it if he had gone up to Hendon, for he is an earnest man according to his lights, and would probably have remonstrated with the young woman, and exhorted her to repentance; her comments on which proceeding would probably have been delivered in rather strong language, at which he, being naturally shocked, would have retired, and the whole thing would have fallen through.

"Now let me see what I have got to do. In the first place I must stipulate with the young woman that she must clear out of the place at Hendon as soon as possible. I dare say there is the usual gimcrack, tawdry furniture, which persons of her class think so elegant, but which will sell for a mere song. But that's no business of mine, and all I can do is to make the annuity which we pay her contingent on her clearing out at once, on her good behaviour, and on her complete silence as regards Mr. Calverley. The most awkward part of the business I have undertaken is that breaking the news of the old gentleman's death. It's possible, but not very likely, that this poor creature may have some feelings of gratitude to him for the home he gave her, and the kindness he showed her; and if so I shall be in a horribly unpleasant position. I never can stand any tears or anything of that sort. Of course there is an element of roughness in what I have to say, however gently I may put it. I think the best plan will be for me to go to the place and try to get an interview with the young person without at first entering upon the object of my visit. By that means I shall be enabled to take stock of her, and see which is the best way to approach her.

"Now what excuse can I make to get into

the house? People of that sort, when they are in luck, are apt to stand very much on their dignity, poor creatures! and to be tremendously exclusive. If I were to send in my own name without announcing any business, I shouldn't be admitted. If I mentioned Calverley or Claxton, I should have to invent a story which would be bad, or, to tell the truth, which would be worse. Now, how can I manage it?"

He paused for a few moments, leaning against the mantelpiece. Then a sudden thought struck him.

"By Jove! Tatlow was up in that neighbourhood and heard from his friend, the master of the workhouse, about this Mrs. Claxton, as she called herself. Perhaps, in the course of his inquiries, he may have learned something which will give me a hint as to how I should best act."

He touched a spring-bell on the table. "Collins," he said, when that worthy appeared, "I am at leisure now for a few minutes."

"Glad to hear it, sir," said Collins. "Mr. George Norland is outside and getting very savage at being kept awaiting. And as for the captain of the Susquehanna——"

"You can send Mr. Norland in as soon as you leave the room, and the captain of the Susquehanna as soon as he comes out, and any one else, to follow hot and hot, like chops. But, in the first place, telegraph to Scotland-yard, and ask Mr. Tatlow to step down to me this afternoon."

By the time Mr. Tatlow arrived Humphrey Statham had seen various impatient ship-brokers, and was tolerably exhausted with the business of the day.

"Just one word, Tatlow!" he said. "I want to have a little talk with that lady of whom you spoke to me—she that lives at Hendon, and adopted the child. But, of course, I don't want to give my own name, or to let her have any hint of the object of my visit. What should you say now was the best line for me to take?"

"Charity, sir!" said Mr. Tatlow promptly. "Mrs. Claxton goes in for that hot and heavy—so they told me down there; and if you were to go as the agent of a society and pitch a good tale, she'd be sure to see you."

"Poor creature!" said Humphrey Statham to himself, after the detective had departed. "Charity, eh?—they frequently do that, I believe. It is the only way in which any remnant of good that may be

left in them can find vent. Well, I'll make my first appearance as agent for a charity to-morrow afternoon."

MICROMEGA.

FRANÇOIS-MARIE AROUET, wit, poet, dramatist, historian, philosopher, satirist, speculator, man of science, man of affairs, man of gallantry—who made for himself the famous name Voltaire—found the wiseacres of the French Academy of Sciences droning off into the slumber of self-complacency. They had decided to their complete satisfaction that there were no other habitable worlds than ours; that there were no inhabitants in the world, worth speaking of, except Frenchmen; that there were no Frenchmen besides Parisians; and that there were no Parisians deserving mention outside the Academy. Voltaire put this stinging-nettle into their bed.

In one of those huge planets which wheel round Sirius, the dog-star, there lived a very intelligent young man, whom I had the pleasure of meeting the last time he visited the little ant-hill we call earth. He was called Micromega, a name which for that matter well expresses the comparative insignificance of all great people. He was twenty-four miles high. When I say twenty-four miles, I mean it: he measured a hundred and twenty thousand feet in his stockings.

Now, place any geometrician in possession of this gentleman's height, and he will at once sit down and calculate, that since a globe of twenty-five thousand miles round produces a man of about five and a half feet high, the planet which Mr. Micromega inhabited must necessarily have a circumference just twenty-one millions six hundred thousand times greater than our tiny earth. Nature, you see, is orderly and proportionate in all her works.

Such being the height of his highness, an artist will readily ascertain that he must have measured fifty thousand feet round the waist; whilst, since the nose is a third of the length of the human face, and the face again the seventh part of the height, it follows that the Sirian's nose must have measured nearly a mile and a half in length.

As for his mind, it was most highly cultivated. He knew much, and invented more. At the early age of two hundred and fifty he evolved more than fifty new

propositions of Euclid from his own internal consciousness. As he advanced to boyhood, at four hundred and fifty, he took pleasure in dissecting many of the tiniest insects, invisible to ordinary microscopes, being no more than a hundred feet long. He composed a learned book about them, which made quite a stir. But the king of his country, who was both ignorant and crotchety, insisted that the book inculcated heretical and erroneous doctrines, and sentenced the author to be banished from court for eight hundred years. Micromega was very little troubled at leaving a court celebrated for arrogant ignorance and servile shoe-licking. He wrote some smart verses against the king and his courtiers, to the monarch's very considerable annoyance, and then set out on a journey from planet to planet to form his mind. We who dwell upon a mere blot of mud, a splash from the great universe, and seldom conceive of anything beyond our own clouds, can scarcely realise any form of locomotion better than those with which we are familiar. But our traveller knew the laws of gravitation, and was alive to the nature of the centrifugal and centripetal forces. By means of fire condensed from sunbeams he obtained a most powerful motive force, without need of fuel, whereby he was enabled to flit from planet to planet, as a bird hops from bough to bough. He simply took flight, and, after a rapid journey, alighted on the planet Saturn. Micromega could scarcely repress a smile at seeing the little globe and its little people. For since Saturn is only nine hundred times as large as the earth, its inhabitants are mere dwarfs of only about a mile high. But he had quite sense enough not to ridicule a man because he measured no more than five thousand feet. When he had done astonishing the people, he became familiar with them, and soon formed an intimate friendship with the Secretary of the Academy of Sciences. It may be interesting to report a singular conversation which took place one day between Micromega and the Saturnian:

"How varied is Nature in her ways!" said Micromega, lounging into a seat.

"True," answered the Saturnian. "Nature is like a garden of flowers."

"Never mind the flowers," said the other.

"Nature is like an assembly of beautiful damsels — like a gallery of superb pictures."

"Never mind comparisons," said Micro-

mega, sharply. "Nature is Nature, and no more can be said about it. Why do you try?"

"To please you," answered the secretary.

"I don't want to be pleased," said Micromega. "I want to be instructed. Tell me how many senses the people of your globe possess."

"We have seventy-two," said the academician; "but every day we find them too few. Our imagination soars beyond our capacities for realising its dreams. Our seventy-two senses, our ring, our five moons, all are too circumscribed; and, in spite of all, we weary and die of tedium vitæ rather than of old age."

"I quite believe it," answered Micromega. "It is the same with us in our globe, where we have a thousand senses. I have travelled not a little, and seen beings both superior and inferior to ourselves; but I have never yet found any who had not more desires than wants, and more wants than could be gratified. Maybe I shall one day reach a country where people want for nothing; but up to the present time I have not seen any one who could tell me exactly where it is situated. Let us revert from fancies to facts. How long do men live in this planet?"

"Oh, but a very little while," said the little Saturnian; "only five hundred revolutions round the sun" (about fifteen thousand years of our reckoning). "You see it gives us no time at all. Our life is but a point, our years are but a moment, our globe is but an atom. One has scarce begun to live—experience is impossible—when death comes and casts us down."

Micromega answered: "Were you not a philosopher I should fear to afflict you, by telling you that our life is seven hundred times as long. But when the moment arrives for us to give up our bodies to the elements, to be reanimated into new forms (the process we call death), it matters little to have lived an eternity or to have lived but a day—it is the same thing. With us, we are always complaining of the shortness of life; and I have been in distant planets, where folks live a thousand times longer. It is the same there. Only now and then does one meet a wise man who accepts his lot and gives humble thanks to the Great Author of his being. But tell me, how many essential properties of matter you distinguish?"

"If you speak of essential properties, without which our globe could not exist,"

replied the Saturnian, "we reckon three hundred—such as expansion, impenetrability, mobility, gravitation, divisibility, and so on."

"Doubtless this small number suffices for the purposes the Creator had in view in making so small a planet," said Micromega. "I reverence His wisdom in it all. A little globe—little inhabitants with few sensations—matter with meagre properties—it is all-wise and proportionate. What colour is your sun?"

"A yellowish white," said the Saturnian; "and when we divide one of its rays we find it composed of seven colours."

"Our sun," said Micromega, "is of a metallic red tone, and we have thirty-nine primitive colours. No sun I have ever seen is like it."

After some more conversation of a similar nature, the two philosophers determined to travel together and explore other planets. So, packing up their mathematical instruments, they left Saturn, and soon alighted upon the ring. Thence they journeyed from moon to moon, and availing themselves of a passing comet, they mounted it, and were swiftly carried through space. After a long time, seeing a little shining ball beneath them, they resolved to rest there, and so descended the tail of the comet. An aurora borealis brought them safely to our earth, where they landed on the southern shore of the Baltic Sea, July the 5th, 1737. First they walked from north to south, then they walked all round the world, accomplishing the latter journey in thirty-six hours; but they could not see a single inhabitant, nor discern the least sign to lead them to suspect that beings so distinguished as ourselves had the honour of existing.

The Saturnian academician, who sometimes jumped rather rashly to conclusions, decided, without hesitation, that the earth was uninhabited. The first reason he gave was that he had not seen any inhabitants.

"Allow me to remind you that your reasoning is bad," said Micromega; "for by the same argument you might contend that many stars of the fiftieth magnitude, which are distinctly visible to me, do not exist simply because your little eyes cannot perceive them."

"But," returned his dwarfish companion, "I have examined carefully."

"But," said the other, "you have badly weighed the results of your examination."

"But," urged the dwarf, "this little globe is so badly constructed, it is so

irregular and so ridiculous in shape. It is all a chaos. Look at those little crooked streams, no bigger than a thread, and those shapeless ponds, neither round nor square, nor any other shape, and these little peaks that prick one's feet so in walking." (He was speaking of rivers, and oceans, and mountains.) "Observe the form of the globe, how flat it is at the poles. Then see how absurdly it turns round the sun in such a way that it is nearly always dark at the poles. What makes me think it is uninhabited, is because no person well supplied with senses could possibly reconcile himself to dwell here."

"Very good," said Micromega; "but even that would not exclude people indifferently supplied with senses from living here. It seems to me all this was not made for nothing. It may appear irregular enough compared with Jupiter and Saturn; but the fact that we cannot perceive its order should not make us suppose it is necessarily in confusion. Have I not told you that my travels have led me to remark the variety of Nature's ways?"

The Saturnian replied somewhat warmly, and the dispute would not have soon finished, had not Micromega by accident broken the thread of a diamond necklace he wore. The diamonds fell upon the ground. They were nice little gems: the largest might weigh four hundred weight, the smaller, perhaps, fifty pounds. The dwarf began to pick them up, and, as he did so, discovered that the fashion of their cutting rendered them splendid microscopes. He took one little microscope which magnified a hundred and sixty times, and applied it to his eye. Micromega chose one of a magnifying power of two thousand five hundred. The diamonds were excellent lenses, but at first they could perceive nothing by their aid. Presently, beginning to learn the focus of the instrument, the inhabitant of Saturn saw something very small and black upon the Baltic Sea: it was a whale. He raised it gently from the water, and setting it on his thumb-nail, showed it to his fellow-traveller, who could not help smiling at the exceeding littleness of the inhabitants of our globe.

The Saturnian, now convinced that the earth was inhabited, concluded at once that it must be peopled with whales, and began to speculate on their origin, and to wonder if they had ideas and free will. Micromega examined the atom with great care, but was unable to pronounce whether it had a soul or no. They were both inclined

to think that no living thing endowed with spirit existed upon the earth, when, by the aid of their microscope, they observed another object about the size of the whale floating on the waters of the Baltic. The fact was, a shipload of philosophers were returning from a grand intellectual and international congress, where they had distinguished themselves by making a great many observations, which neither they nor any one else understood. The newspapers said their vessel ran aground in the Gulf of Bothnia, and that passengers and crew were saved with great difficulty; but one seldom knows in this world the exact history of any transaction. I am going faithfully to recount what took place, without adding anything of my own, and that is no little privation to an historian.

Micromega stretched out his hand towards the object, lifted up the vessel full of philosophers very tenderly with two fingers, and set it on his finger-nail for fear of squeezing it.

"Ah," said the dwarf from Saturn, "here, now, we have an animal distinctly different from the former."

The Sirian removed the animal in question to the hollow of his hand for safety. The passengers and people of the ship believing themselves lifted up by a hurricane and cast on a species of rock, instantly began to set themselves in commotion; the sailors took barrels of wine, cast them overboard upon the hand of Micromega, and then descended the ship's side. The geometricians took their quadrants, their sextants, and their theodolites, and came out upon the Sirian's fingers. The giant felt something tickle his finger; it was the iron-tipped staff of the theodolite which they had driven a foot and more into his skin; a kind of bristle, Micromega judged, proceeding from the little animal in his hand, but did not suspect the truth. The microscope, which could hardly distinguish a whale from a passenger-ship, entirely failed to reveal a creature so imperceptible as man. Taking up a diamond of much greater magnifying power, imagine the Sirian's pleasure when he first saw these little insects move about upon his open palm. Trembling with delight, he placed a similar lens in the hands of his fellow-traveller, and both began to watch them with wonder and surprise.

They questioned whether it were possible that these mites could have anything equivalent to a soul. The Saturnian refused to believe it. He said that presupposed intelligence; that intelligent beings could

communicate ideas; that he had not heard these beings speak; and therefore he supposed they did not speak. Besides, how could imperceptible beings have organs of speech, and what could they have to say? In order to talk it was needful to think, or something like it; but if they thought, they must have souls; to attribute souls to things so small was absurd.

"Let us examine these insects; we can reason about them afterwards," said Micromega. With that he drew out a pair of scissors, and cutting a piece of his thumb-nail, rolled it up into a kind of ear-trumpet like a vast funnel, and put the small end against his ear. The mouth of the speaking trumpet entirely enveloped the whole ship. The feeblest voice entering the funnel reverberated loudly against its circular sides, so that, at length, the philosopher above was able to hear a faint buzz proceeding from the insects beneath. After an hour's persevering application he could distinguish words. So could the dwarf, but less clearly. Their astonishment increased every moment. They heard the mites talk good sense. Marvellous freak of nature!

The Sirian took the dwarf upon his knee, and bending down his head to the little people in his hand, he spake thus in his softest whisper: "Oh, invisible insects, whom the hand of the Creator has been pleased to make so infinitely small, I thank Him for showing me a mystery I deemed inscrutable. It may be they would disdain to receive you at the court whence I was banished, but I despise nothing, and I offer you my protection."

If any people were ever astonished they were those to whom these words were addressed. They could not imagine whence the words came. The ship's chaplain began to pray, the sailors to swear, the philosophers to propound theories, but neither plan proved effectual in revealing the source of the strange voice. Then the Saturnian dwarf, who had a much softer voice than Micromega, told in a few words who they were and whence they came, and after complaining of the exceeding smallness of his hearers, began to question them. Had they always lived in this wretched state, on the very borders of annihilation? What did they do in a globe apparently made expressly for whales? Were they happy? Did they marry and have families? Had they souls? And so on.

One geometrician of the company, more hardy than his fellows, and shocked to find

any one sceptical about the mental endowments of the race, took an observation of the speaker with his quadrant from three different points of view, and having done so, spoke thus:

"And so you think because you happen to measure five thousand feet from your boots to your crown, that therefore——"

"Five thousand feet!" cried the dwarf. "Good heavens, how did he know my height! Not an inch out. What! This atom, measure *me*? This is geometry. He knows my height, whilst I, who am conscious of his existence only through an immensely powerful microscope, actually don't yet know his."

"Yes," said the geometrician, "I have measured you, and now I will measure your big companion." Micromega was obliged to lie down, for when he stood up his head was in the clouds. The mites quickly ascertained by trigonometry that they saw before them a young man of a hundred and twenty thousand feet high.

"Oh, intelligent atoms," said Micromega, "in whom the Eternal shows forth His great power, pure indeed must be your joys, for since you possess so little matter and appear to be all soul, you must doubtless pass your whole time in thought and love; the true life of spirits."

A very frank philosopher replied, that with the exception of a mere few, and those few held of little account by the masses, all the rest of the world consisted of an assemblage of fools, malefactors, and idiots.

"We have more matter than is requisite to do a great deal of mischief," said he, "if one only has the will. At this present moment there are a hundred thousand fools of our species who wear helmets, engaged in killing or rather murdering a hundred thousand others who wear turbans. Almost all through the world the same thing is going on, and has been going on from time immemorial."

The Sirian frowned and asked what could be the cause of such horrible quarrels among such pitiful little people.

"All about a bit of dirt no bigger than your finger-nail," answered the philosopher.

"Not one of these thousands of men who are cutting one another's throats," continued he, "cares one straw about the bit of ground he is fighting for. It is only whether it shall belong to one man whom they call Sultan, or to another they call (I can't tell why) Cæsar. Neither of *these* men has ever seen, or ever will see the bit

of land the fighting is about, and scarcely one of those who are mutually cutting each other's throats on their behalf has ever seen either of the men for whom they get their throats cut."

"Wretches!" cried Micromega, indignantly, "it is hardly possible to imagine madness so furious and malicious. I should be doing a just action were I to go and crush out the whole ant's-nest of puny murderers with three steps of my foot."

"Do not give yourself the trouble," said the philosopher. "They annihilate themselves quite fast enough. Even when they do not draw the sword, famine, overwork, and intemperance carry them off nearly as fast. It is not they who should be punished, but those sedentary savages who sit in luxurious palaces, who, during an after-dinner lounge, will order the massacre of a million of their kind, and then be driven to church in state to give solemn thanks to Heaven for it."

The traveller was moved with pity for the tiny race. Said he to the philosophers:

"Since, then, you belong to the small number of wise men who do not apparently earn your bread by killing each other, pray tell me how you occupy your time?"

Answered one: "We dissect flies—we measure lines—we calculate figures. We are perfectly agreed upon two or three points which we understand, and we are eternally disputing about two or three thousand which we do not understand."

It seemed like some strange dream to the Sirian and the Saturnian to listen to the doings of these thinking insects.

"How far do you reckon it from Sirius to the star Castor?" asked Micromega.

They answered altogether, "Thirty-three and a half degrees?"

"And how far from here to the moon?"

"About thirty diameters of the earth, in round numbers."

"What is the weight of your atmosphere?"

Here he thought to puzzle the little people; but they answered, readily enough, it was about nine hundred times less than the weight of a like volume of water, and ninety thousand times less than that of standard gold. At this reply the Saturnian dwarf was so astonished that he was inclined to take for sorcerers the very beings to whom, not a quarter of an hour before, he had denied the possession of souls.

Micromega said: "Since you are so well acquainted with what is beyond you, doubt-

less you are no less well informed as to that which is within. Tell me what is your soul, and how you account for the formation of ideas?"

They began to speak altogether, as before, but this time no two of them were agreed. One quoted Aristotle, another referred to Descartes; this one spoke of Malebranche, that of Leibnitz, the other of Locke. Presently an old Cartesian philosopher made himself heard above the rest. Said he:

"The soul is an intelligence. The reason of its being, is because it is. This is what Aristotle expressly states, page six hundred and thirty-three, Louvre edition." He quoted the passage.

"I don't understand Greek," said the giant.

"Nor I," answered the philosophic mite.

"Then pray why do you quote Greek?"

"Because," answered the philosopher, "nothing can be more appropriate than to speak of a subject of which one knows nothing in a language of which one understands still less."

Another philosopher said: "The soul is a spirit which, previous to its birth, is acquainted with the whole system of metaphysics, but on being born is obliged to go to school to re-learn that which it once knew very well, but can never know any more."

"It profits nothing," said Micromega, "to have been so wise before birth only to grow up into a man whose only sign of wisdom is his beard. But, what do you mean by a spirit?"

"Why do you ask?" said the debater; "how can any one tell what spirit is? We only know it is not matter."

"But do you know what matter is?"

"Certainly. For instance, this stone is of a grey colour, it has a certain form, it has its three dimensions, it is weighty and divisible."

"Very good," answered the Sirian; "this object which you say appears to be divisible, weighty, and so on—will you tell me what it is? You are acquainted with some of its qualities, but the ground of the thing—the thing itself—do you know what that is?"

"No," said he.

"Then you do not even know what matter is."

Micromega, addressing himself to another sage seated upon his thumb, asked what he thought his soul was, and what was its purpose?

"Nothing at all," said the disciple of

Malebranche, "for God does all in me and for me and through me. It is He does everything with which I am concerned."

"Scarce worth while, then, to be," observed the Sirian. "And you, my friend," turning to an exponent of Leibnitz, "what say you?"

"The soul," answered he, "is the hand that points the hours whilst my body strikes them; or, if you like, the soul strikes the hours which my body indicates; or, better, my soul is the mirror of the universe, and my body is its frame. I hope I make myself sufficiently clear."

Then spake a disciple of Locke. "For my part I do not know how I think, but I know that I never derive impressions except through the medium of my senses. I do not dispute that there may be immaterial and intelligent substances, but it seems to me impossible for thought to be communicated to matter. I reverence the Great Eternal Power. It is not for me to set bounds to it. I affirm nothing, but am content to believe there are many things possible to a supreme intelligence which it would be impossible for me to understand."

The giant smiled, yet he thought this one not the least wise of all the philosophers. The dwarf would have embraced the speaker had not his extreme disproportion of size prevented such a cordial manifestation. Unfortunately, a little fellow in a square cap pushed himself forward and begged to dissent from the opinions expressed by the other philosophical animalculæ. He said he knew all about the soul and all about the universe. He said it was a source of unspeakable comfort to him to feel (and here he looked the two celestial visitants deliberately up and down from top to toe) that they and their worlds, their suns, and stars, and mighty systems, had all been created expressly for the good of mankind!

At this the two travellers became convulsed with that inextinguishable laughter which, according to Homer, is an enjoyment belonging exclusively to the gods. They shook with it to that extent that the vessel tumbled off the Sirian's palm and fell into his pocket. The two good folks, after much groping about, found the ship, and replacing the little mites on board set it afloat again. In bidding them farewell, Micromega spoke very kindly, notwithstanding he was not a little vexed to find beings so infinitely little puffed up with conceit so infinitely great. He promised

to write a book of philosophy for their instruction and guidance, assuring them they should therein see the sum of all philosophy and the substance of all wisdom.

In due course this volume found its way to Paris, to the Academy of Sciences; but when the good old secretary opened it he found nothing but a book completely blank!

PASSED AWAY.

WEEP no more, strive no more, let the dream go,
No soft summer showers make plucked roses blow.

The fair vase is broken, the sweet scent is lost,
Let the crushed fragments lie, count not the cost.

The bond that is severed no charm can unite,
No magic can make again noonday's spent light.

Weep no more, hope no more, pray not, nor trust;
Oh, fair was our idol, we framed it of dust.

It crumbled before us, the gay colours fled,
The radiance has vanished, the glory is dead.

Yearn no more, look no more mournfully back,
Let the long grasses wave over the track.

Let the soft sunshine sleep quiet and calm,
Let the low wind breathe its musical balm,

Till the pang is forgotten, forgotten the tomb,
Till o'er the crushed leaflets fresh violets bloom.

What! they will not leave fragrance, like those we
have known,

Hush, think no more, weep no more, summer is flown!

SIGHT-SEEING IN BETHNAL GREEN.

If it be accepted as an established fact that it is a "far cry to Loch Awe," it must also be conceded that, from a West-end point of view, Bethnal Green marks nearly the uttermost bounds of metropolitan civilisation, and that the upper end of the Hackney-road is almost the ultima Thule of the world of London. And it cannot be said that the beauties of the route—at all events of the route which was selected by the beery cabman who took charge of the present writer a couple of Saturdays ago—are at all calculated to lighten the tedium of the journey. The passage, for instance, of the defile of Orange-street, Red Lion-square, is not calculated to produce an equable frame of mind at starting. This cheerful thoroughfare is always blocked up by a railway van; a ginger-beer cart, in charge of a small boy of hopelessly stolid aspect and preternatural obstinacy; a hand-barrow, the owner whereof is presumably solacing himself at the bar of the neighbouring public-house; and a hansom cab, the driver of which smiles

pleasantly on the turmoil around him, and, save that at intervals he expectorates and swears pleasantly, manifests no signs of life, however much he may be adjured to "pull up 'arf a yard," or "jist back up agin the kerb." When he has sufficiently goaded his fellow-man to madness, he makes the desired concession—I believe that it is always the same man, and that he adopts this means of displaying his hatred of his kind—and leaves just room enough for you to pass between his wheels and those of the railway van. It is scarcely necessary to say that the gentleman in charge of this latter vehicle never by any chance makes way at all, but sits aloft chewing a straw, and grimly enjoying the sarcasm with which the boy who looks after the interior of the van relieves the monotony of the proceedings. Neither is he concerned when, after sending the hand-barrow flying among the foot-passengers, and knocking the ginger-beer boy among his bottles, your cabman wildly dashes his wheels against the rock of Pickford. He knows what will come of that—he has tried it often—and his grin of satisfaction, as you are wildly bumped from side to side, is even harder to bear than the shrill whistle with which his boy hails your misfortunes. Thus it happens that you emerge from Orange-street—at least I always do—in an agitated state of mind, scarcely to be soothed even by the gentle melancholy of Clerkenwell. However, those long lines of dull, shabby streets; of mean little houses distinguished only by the number and magnitude of the shining brass plates with which they are adorned; of narrow up and down thoroughfares, stretching away in endless succession to right and left, and reminding you a little of Bath in very reduced circumstances; of beer-houses and watchmakers, general shops and lodgings to let, speedily produce their ordinarily depressing effect, and prepare the mind by gentle degrees for the dirt and misery, the uncomfortable sights and sounds of Shore-ditch and the adjacent neighbourhood. Through what back settlements I passed to reach the Cambridge-road, I shall in all probability never know. All that I can say of them with any certainty is, that they were not pleasant either to the eye or to the nose, and that they made the Cambridge-road itself, albeit as dry, and dusty, and uninteresting as the great desert of Sahara, quite a cheerful and pleasant thoroughfare by contrast.

Unaccustomed barouches are to be seen

to-day in the Cambridge-road. A shining mail Phaeton stands before a Bethnal Green public-house, and the groom in charge, gorgeous as to his buttons, brilliantly black and delicately cream-coloured as to his top-boots, is burying his nose in an East-end pewter, not proud, but yet with a certain air of superiority and condescension refreshing to behold. A real live swell of the first brand (meeker he than the booted one) is contemplating, not without wonder, the shop of the dairy-man who keeps his cows in the front parlour, and draws his milk "in your own jugs," as if it were bitter beer, or "cream of the valley;" and more elegant ladies' dresses stir the dust of Bethnal Green than Bethnal Green has ever seen before, except, perhaps, in process of manufacture, in which condition the neighbourhood is aware (painfully enough, sometimes) of silk, and familiar with lace, and feathers, and ribbons. But these novelties have no attractions to-day, even for a Saturday afternoon crowd, with plenty of time on its hands. There is something more attractive just round the corner. Horses and carriages, and even real live swells, your East-ender can see any day he may choose to make a journey westward; but to have a museum opened all for yourself, to have had it inaugurated with all sorts of state and ceremony by the Heir to the Throne, and to be able to go in and out free gratis and for nothing, as often as you like, are events the like of which are not of everyday occurrence in Bethnal Green. Thus it happens that the hardworking, struggling people of the East, and the curious dilettante of the West, who are attracted hither by the fame of Sir Richard Wallace's noble loan, agree for the time to sink their differences, and flock with one accord to the latest experiment of the indefatigable Mr. Cole.

The Bethnal Green Branch of the South Kensington Museum, as the new exhibition in the East is officially called, is our old friend the Brompton Boilers removed from South Kensington, and, with certain alterations, put up in the heart of Bethnal Green. The attractions which the South Kensington part of the show offers to sight-seers are not particularly exciting or interesting, but the liberality of Sir Richard Wallace has provided, in this remote part of London, such an exhibition of works of art, as it would be difficult to match in the proudest collections in the world. This gentleman, already well and favourably known to the poor of

Paris as well as of London, may in truth be called the founder of this museum. Without his loan of the art treasures collected by the late Marquis of Hertford, a collection justly described in Mr. Cole's introduction to the catalogue as being of "almost unexampled beauty and value," it might perhaps not have been very easy to make the Bethnal Green Museum so attractive as to insure its immediate success. But, as it is, South Kensington is as lucky in the East as it has been in the West, and has secured at once, and without difficulty, a good start—one of the most important points for any enterprise, and more especially for an enterprise addressed in the main to ignorance, and exposed to the unreasoning prejudices too often entertained by the lower class of English people against art and all belonging to it.

If the stream of people flowing into the building is a goodly sign of success, the crowd inside is even better evidence still, and most satisfactory of all is the proof which is afforded by a bird's-eye view of the building from the upper gallery, and by a subsequent tour of the various departments, that the bulk of the people present are the very people for whose benefit the exhibition is intended. The fate of mechanics' institutes, of working-men's clubs, and of many other well-intentioned but perfectly futile attempts to get into the confidence of what are conventionally known as the working classes, and to help in some way the work of education from outside, might have inspired misgivings as to the probable success of the Bethnal Green Branch in the proper quarter. But the first glance at the people present is sufficient. Whether it is that gratuitous shows are rare in the north-east of London; whether it is that a love of art for its own sake actually exists in the Bethnal Green breast; whether the prestige of a royal visit has anything to do with it, or whatever the cause may be, the result is clear. Sir Richard Wallace's collection attracts, literally, *the people*.

We are all here. From all parts of London, in all sorts of clothes, by all sorts of conveyances—Shanks's mare and the Marrowbone stage having, I fancy, been most in request—we have come in our hundreds, if not in our thousands, and being here, seem determined to make the most of what is provided for us. We are here, three of us, in diaphanous muslins, in fly-away silks, in impossible bonnets, in paniers, high-heeled shoes, chignons, poudre de riz, and the rest of it. We don't know what it

is to want anything, and know nothing of work except that it is "horrid," and not for the likes of us. With us is our escort, no whit behind us in splendour, though in a somewhat more subdued style, and we look through our eye-glasses, say rude things in an audible tone, and make ourselves generally objectionable in our usual manner, and in a perfectly natural and artless style, as it is our nature to do, being, as it is also our nature to be, perfectly satisfied with ourselves the while. We are here also, four of us, in alpaca, a good deal worn and rather faded; with poor little shawls and mantles, and crushed little bonnets—we must keep up with the fashions—or shapeless little hats; with odds and ends of ribbon, where no ribbon should be, and with generally vague ideas on the subject of the proper management of colours, which it is to be hoped Sir Richard Wallace may help to set right. Our escort has a fustian jacket and a fur cap, and has his barrow somewhere round the corner, and we know right well what it is to work hard for our scanty wage, and have often had a pretty good notion what starvation means. But we seem to take just as much interest in the beautiful things before us—albeit we have never seen such things before—as those resplendent beings to whom such sights are common, and we are satisfied, for the time being, with ourselves and our lot, and are just as free with our comments on our neighbours as if we had been born and bred in fashionable circles. We are here, whole families of us—small tradesfolk we—somewhat bewildered, but critical, and disposed, the elder of us, to improve the occasion with lectures, and to turn the Museum into an educational instrument for the benefit of the younger members of our families, a proceeding which reduces us younger branches (our name being also legion) to the lowest depths of gloom and misanthropy. Some of us have mounted our Sunday suits in honour of the occasion, some of us have come in our working clothes, many of us in all probability have to make one suit serve for work and play, and must perforce come in that, or stay away. We have come, having to do with the driving of sheep and cattle, in the long square-cut linen or holland coat with many pockets protected by huge flaps, in the tight horsey trousers, big ankle-jacks, mud-coated in the driest weather, and thick sticks, affected by our kind. We are shrewd-looking mechanics, engineers in linen working-jackets, railway porters in velveteen suits, carpenters,

smiths, weavers, labourers: representatives, in fine, of all the countless industries of the industrious East. We are of as many and as widely different occupations as are celebrated in the old nursery line about "Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, gentleman, apothecary, ploughboy," how does it end? Thief, I am afraid. And I am afraid also that even that branch of industry is not unrepresented among us. For we are, some of us, too slinking as to our walk, too stealthy as to our eye, too defiant and aggressive, and, at the same time, too cringing and mean as to our manner, not to be easily recognised. When we assume this shape we are as a rule too long in the neck, and much too narrow in the shoulders; our hair is suspiciously short, or greasily long; we are shabby rakes addicted to dirty finery, and our complexions have that peculiar muddy, unwholesome shade of colour, which seems, somehow, exactly adapted to the atmosphere of a metropolitan police-station, or of a low public-house singing-room. But being here (as we are, indeed, everywhere else) we cannot but feel that the exercise of our predatory instincts would be out of place, not to speak of the vigilant eye of the policeman being upon us, and we cast aside the responsibilities of business and enjoy ourselves with the best. "Father" and "mother" are here, be sure, old-fashioned in manner as well as in years, and rarely to be seen away from their own neighbourhood, for the young brood are all scattered, and there is no strong arm left to help the old people. Consequently, when mother, who, though old enough in all conscience, is still apple-cheeked and brisk, bustles cheerily up the stairs, father, who in the neatness of his poor dress, and the elaborate brushing of his old-world broad-brimmed hat, speaks volumes in favour of mother's care, is fain to rest, half-way, on his stick, and to reply to the cheerful call, "Come on, father," with a tired cough, and some little irritability of manner. Here also, of course, are Jones and his "old 'oman." Jones, a steady, persevering sight-seer, generally in some way connected with carpentering or upholstering, for ever pushing on, and sorely troubled by the old 'oman, who, dressed in the warmest clothing, is a perspiring and flame-coloured witness to the heat of the day, and would give anything to be allowed to sit down or go home. Young and old, men and women, boys and girls, rich and poor, we have all been invited to the feast, and have all come.

We have, as may be supposed, the most

different views on matters of art, but we unite on the common ground of colour, and when we see plenty of it, know we are all right. Thus a Dead Peacock and Hare, by Weeninix, brilliant in the brightest of blues and greens, makes all our world kin, and holds us in rapt and open-eyed admiration. An unmistakable costermonger remarks that it is "a fine thing;" two young ladies with a certain undefined air of sewing-machine somehow pervading their appearance, opine that it is a "gorgeous picture;" and one young gentleman in a large green tie, which serves admirably to set off the somewhat seedy state of the rest of his attire, remarks to his friend that it is a "splendid work." The friend, conspicuous by wearing, himself, a large portion of a peacock's feather in his wideawake hat, thinks it "stunning," but is even more impressed by a remarkable portrait of Her Majesty the Queen, by Sully, painted many years ago, which is a perfect dream of red and crimson. By-and-bye, no doubt, these worthy people will learn to look at the two noble Vandykes close by, which they now pass over with hardly a glance; but we must not expect too much all at once. All in good time, too, will come an eye for Sir Joshua, but Nelly O'Brien has now to look reproachfully from under her large hat at careless gazers, and the Strawberry Girl and Lady Conway must for the time go without their usual crowd of admirers. But we seem to respect the gift-horse proverb, and look at everything respectfully, even if we cannot understand or admire it all; except, indeed, when we come to allegory. Allegory almost always excites us to mirth, and even to derision, and it must be admitted that we have some reason for turning up our noses, educated or uneducated, at Lemoyne's "Time revealing Truth," which not one of us fails to do. We are not quite up to Meissonier and the subtler French pictures (we are a little astonished at there being any French painters at all to begin with), but Decamp's Arabs, and Vernet's dashing soldiers and brigands, the blood-dripping sword of Allan M'Aulay, and the broken head of the dog of the regiment, come home to all our feelings, and it is a blow to us when even Vernet proves too much for us with the Apotheosis of Napoleon, which we pronounce "a rum go," and which we declare (and not without reason) our inability to make out. Rosa Bonheur holds quite a levée of drovers, pale with admiration, and it is

curious to notice that one of our favourite pictures is Ary Scheffer's noble Francesca di Rimini. It is true we can't quite make out what it is about, but there is no doubt we admire it hugely, and Costermonger Joe, who stands before it full of admiration, and explains his views to his party with much energy—the effect of the lecture a little marred by the goodly bunch of flowers the honest fellow *will* keep in the corner of his mouth—has quite a large and appreciative audience. The gentleman in the dress-coat and black satin waistcoat over yonder also attracts a considerable circle of listeners as he loudly expresses dissatisfaction with Mr. W. P. Frith's "Lady bringing in Wine on a Salver," whom he avers to be identically the same individual as the "young gal in the print they calls 'Sherry, sir?'" as hangs in the club-room," and is not to be appeased until reminded that the picture was painted by "im as did the Derby Day," when he is somewhat mollified, and even goes the length of conceding that the picture is a "pretty thing." But being of a critical, not to say a carping disposition, he is presently to be found again addressing the public before Meissonier's admirable "Polichinel," which he pronounces with great fervour to be "no more like Punch than it's like my Bill," and presently, overcome with disgust, leaves the building, to all appearance the only discontented man among us.

How we inspected the china, popularly described as "such a lot of cups and saucers," the beautiful vases, and miniatures, and objects of art generally; the Beauvais tapestry and old French chairs and sofas, stigmatised by an authority among us, with a carpenter's rule protruding from his breast-pocket, as "rig'lar shabby furniture;" the Venetian thrones, which, in the opinion of the same authority, have been "just done up expensive," and all that we thought and said of all these things, there is no time or space to tell here. Neither is it necessary to chronicle the acute boredom and mental prostration which overcame most of us when we fell a prey to the Food Collection (although Mr. Cole does tell us it is one of the most popular divisions of the South Kensington Museum), or worse still, when we were claimed for its own by the Animal Products Collection, which is "intended to illustrate the various applications of animal substances to industrial purposes." It may be merely recorded that we took no interest in the quantity of water contained in rye,

that albumen and gluten did not come home to our feelings, and that for the most part we looked with incredulity, if not with contempt, on the glass phials and cubes supposed to represent the chemical components of the human body. Nor did an exhibition of mushroom powder, of dried mushrooms, and of a bottle of mushroom ketchup, at all raise our spirits. Indeed, in this department all that we seemed curious about was the case containing the analyses of various kinds of liquors, and as that reminded us that the human body requires periodical refreshment, we generally withdrew after a brief examination of this part of the show.

We behaved ourselves admirably, as Londoners almost invariably do when the better side of their character is appealed to, and when they are trusted, as they are trusted here, to be, so to speak, themselves the guardians of order, and I have no doubt it would have gone hard with any one who had shown the smallest disposition to behave ill. And the worthy alderman who objected so much to the introduction of beer into Victoria Park some two or three years ago, may perhaps be surprised to hear that, although Mr. Cole has been rash enough to listen to the voice of the tempter, and to establish Spiers and Pond in the basement, the Bethnal Green Branch Museum is not in consequence turned into a "drunkery," and that no sign of any likelihood of an abuse of reasonable privileges was anywhere to be seen. As I left the building, people were still streaming into it in crowds, and I met many more evidently bound for the Museum as I made my way along the Cambridge-road. I could have no doubt that the complete success of the undertaking is thus early assured.

It had been an exciting week for Hackney and Bethnal Green, that last week of June, and an unmistakable morning-after air pervaded the neighbourhood on the Saturday. Two royal progresses—the Museum was opened on Monday, and the Princess Louise did her part of the good work by inaugurating an excellent children's hospital in the Hackney-road on Friday—are enough to try any neighbourhood, and had "taken it out" of Hackney considerably. The flags which had waved a welcome to the royal visitors were coming down very leisurely, and the tradesmen were taking their time about stripping the red and gold hangings and inscriptions from their shops. Indeed I saw one gentleman, evidently unable to bring his mind to the destruction of the elegant decoration

which made his first-floor front so brave a show, who was calmly sitting at his open window and smoking a contemplative pipe, as if he were almost in hopes that the Prince of Wales might have forgotten something at the Museum, and might shortly be expected back that way to fetch it. It was hot in the Hackney-road and dusty, and there was much sitting in the gateways of brewhouses and outside taps, and much scraping of fiddles, and a general air of mild dissipation which was very seductive. So I did at Hackney as the Hackneys did, and poured a modest libation to the success of the Museum; and to the healths of Sir Richard Wallace, who nobly deserves the thanks not only of East London, but of his country at large, and of Mr. Cole, who has been one of the best abused men of his time, but who will perhaps in the long run be found to have done almost as much for the education of the working classes as any philanthropist of them all.

KING CRAM IN INDIA.

WE all know King Cram in England, as the terror of parents and guardians who have young men to launch in life. We are not here accustomed to give him the sovereign title; though we know him to be fast exceeding his proper functions as prime minister to King Competition, and making himself master of that constitutional monarch. But in India—according to complaints made far and wide—he has already arrived at the extreme pitch of power, and exercises despotic sway over the service which supplies the administration of the country.

From his seat of government at home King Cram rules over the services of England and India indiscriminately. But the military service is now general, and it is of the civil service that I specially speak. In England the service proper is only a bureaucracy, and parliament takes care to exercise the governing authority; but in India there is no parliament, and the service furnishes the main element in the councils which make laws and help the viceroy to do his ruling. From the same body, too, many of the judges are supplied; the governors and lieutenant-governors of provinces for the most part; and upon more than one occasion the governor-general himself has been of the number. All these officials are selected from the presentations

made to King Competition, and as they are nominated beforehand by King Cram, it follows that King Cram must exercise, in India alone, an enormous influence upon the destinies of about one hundred and eighty millions of people.

To see how King Cram obtained his power we need not go very far back. The competitive system was introduced into India—portentous sign—just before the revolt of 1857. There was no urgent necessity for the change, except that the East India Company had become too much of a family party, held itself as independent as possible of public opinion, and cherished old traditions of a Chinese kind, opposed to any improvement which involved opening up the country to the enterprise of “foreigners” out of their pale. And the civil service, under the company’s auspices, had for some time had its own way in India a great deal too much. Noisy men among the proprietors and noisy men in parliament traced undoubted grievances to this source; and the result was certain reforms, of which the institution of the competitive system for the civil service was one of the most important.

It was welcomed by every class of the community in India, except the members of the service themselves, and the change was almost universally applauded, until the new men began to arrive. Then the instability of public opinion became manifest. Nobody thought the competition man—who was supposed to have made his way by his own merits—by any means so considerable a personage as the child of the patronage system, supposed to have been chosen from his birth for a member of council or a lieutenant-governor. The new man, apart from his merits, came out under unfavourable social conditions. Nobody knew him. Instead of being put up with a big civilian immediately on his arrival, petted by the big civilian’s wife, and introduced to society at a series of dinners and balls, he had to vegetate abjectly at an hotel or a boarding-house. It is the custom in India for the new arrivals to call upon the residents, and so make their acquaintance in the first instance, more particularly as regards the members of the same service. The competition man never dared make such a demonstration, and would remain for months at the presidency where he arrived without making any acquaintances beyond travelling companions and fellow-lodgers. Then—just when his condition was most critical—a native journal christened the

new class of civil servants “Competition Wallahs.” There is nothing satirical in the phrase, but it has humble associations, and somehow seemed comically contemptuous. It made a hit, and came into common application, not to the increased dignity of those so designated. The new-comers, too, were critically compared with their predecessors in the service, and with many reasons for being at a disadvantage. Everybody knew the old class of men. They were nearly all related to one another, and to the older members of the service. Their very names associated them at once with the history of the country for a hundred years past. In coming to India they seemed to be coming home, and at home they made themselves without loss of time. It is easy enough for young men to be high-spirited and popular with the encouragement they received; it is equally natural for young men not similarly received to be depressed and reticent, and to make an unfavourable social impression. This the “wallahs” somehow managed to do; and, whatever exceptions may have been admitted, they were certainly not popular as a class. They had the reputation, too, of being mere desk men, very well at books, but without any knowledge of horses, or taste for field-sports. It was said, too, that they always wore spectacles, and were prudent to a fault in their personal expenditure. There was a substratum of truth in all this. They were in a strange country, with a strange career before them, and the consciousness that they had only themselves to depend upon. The grinding they had undergone was not conducive to active habits. Some could not ride, others, who could, were chary of buying horses until they found themselves with substantial appointments; they had none of the ardent instincts of their predecessors, who, anticipating the highest positions, drew freely upon their prospects, and, in the old times at least, took to indebtedness as naturally as a duck takes to the water. A young civilian used to set himself up at the outset with all the luxuries that he might expect to pay for when he got high up in the service, and it was a proverb that he had not established his footing in the country until he owed a lakh of rupees. There were no traditions to tempt the “wallah” into such brilliant errors. He was content to be prudent and unassuming, and so, through one cause and another, the idea became prevalent that he was not a gentleman. The “wallah” himself felt this imputation keenly, and one of

the first impressions he would try to make upon you, when you met him for the first time, was that he had no occasion to depend upon his merits, and would have had sufficient interest to get his appointment without any deserts under the old system.

As time went on, the competitioners became more at home in the country; and it was found that the new system, like the old, produced men of varying degrees of ability, with this difference between the two classes; that while the new system produced a fair average, and excluded the decidedly "bad bargains," it did not apparently bring to the Indian service men of the highest mark. I believe that this is the result of experience up to the present time, and that, to a certain extent, the old character ascribed to the "wallah" is justified; he is more a man of the desk than a man of action, and is therefore unsuited for many positions in which, in a country like India, a civil servant is required to be a man of physical capacity, with the instincts and habits of a sportsman, and even of a soldier.

For the supposed requirements of the new class of civil servants, King Competition of course bears the blame. But a gentleman who belongs to another branch of the service—the medical—told us the other night that, not King Competition, but King Cram is the delinquent. I refer to Doctor George Birdwood, the officer in charge of the Indian Department at the International Exhibition, who enlightened the members of the East India Association upon this subject, at the rooms of the Society of Arts. The doctor, in his address, did not make any invidious charge against the members of the service. His object was simply to show that the service is not thrown open, as it is supposed to be, to the mass of Englishmen. He is not against the competitive system, but only against the mode in which it is exercised. He calls the test a "competitive steeple-chase," and, comparing men with horses, says that the race is not so much to the strong, as to the swift—for a short distance. The express aim of the examination, he says, is to trip up as many of the competitors as possible—to pluck, not pass; and unfortunately and inevitably, the result is too often the plucking of the very candidates who, under a scientific system, would have passed, while it passes those who ought to be plucked. He declares, indeed, advisedly, that the competitive system, as a rule,

plucks the best man, and passes the worst. And he cites Mr. Matthew Arnold in support of his belief. Mr. Arnold has said: "I once bore part in the examinations for the Indian civil service, and I can truly say that the candidates to whom I gave the highest marks were, almost without exception, the candidates whom I would not have appointed. They were examined men, not formed men." The effect is, that the civil service fails to attract the best men; and, according to Doctor Birdwood, the medical service, which has undergone a similar test, has suffered in the same way. This service, through the indifference of authority, had grown unpopular, and out of demand, and the competitive system was introduced into it almost in the absence of competitors—the number of candidates, for some time, scarcely exceeding the number of appointments offered to the public. The service was thus made "a feast for the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind." It is not so bad in these days, however, as the doctor admits.

As regards the civil service, says Doctor Birdwood, it would be a complete compensation for the apathy and indifference of the India Office (which has no care for men not appointed by itself) if the competition system were diffusing an interest in the Indian service among the people of England. But this the present system has emphatically failed to do. India has been thrown open to the people, and the people will not have it. The supply of young men is merely kept up by the "crammers." These gentlemen, the doctor tells us, impress sharp boys for the service, and guarantee their passing in consideration of a heavy premium. These boys must be quick and rich, or they have no chance. If a boy be not superficially clever, and cannot pay their charge, they reject him off-hand. Competition, in short, instead of opening up chances for poor men to rise in life, yearly makes it more and more difficult for any but the rich to attempt to obtain a position in the public service. The training required is absolutely injurious, is good only for the competitive examination itself, and is worthless for all else beyond, as well as below it. The system is really the closest monopoly that could be devised, the gang of examiners (I quote Doctor Birdwood) being the directors of the New East India Competitive Examination Dodge Company (strictly limited), but which not even its undoubted success can make honourable. Some of the Indian

services still remain closed against competition, and it is remarkable, says the doctor, that, although paid less than the competitive service, they attract better men. Thus the very best English officials in India are found in the uncovenanted service, educational department, and ecclesiastical establishments. And Doctor Birdwood might have added the legal department, which is certainly manned with ability, though, perhaps, I should not call it a department, as the appointments held by barristers are on an independent footing in the country, and have a status of their own.

Knowing, as we do, the increasing difficulties attendant upon a professional career in England, in the public service or otherwise, these revelations of the rule of King Cram in India are doubly discouraging. It is high time that poor men rose in insurrection against him, or what is to become of, say, the sons of officers of the army and navy, barristers, clergymen, and professional men generally, who cannot, as a rule, be qualified for his patronage? Doctor Birdwood recommends something like a coup d'état, by which he shall be deposed, and the appointments so long in his gift be otherwise bestowed. The doctor proposes to place vacancies at the disposal, in turn, of every public school, college, and university in Great Britain, reserving a fixed proportion, say one-third of the covenanted, and two-thirds of the uncovenanted appointments under the government of India, for the Indian universities and schools. A scheme of this kind would require careful adjustment, and might be made complete under a proper development of our new educational system. Meanwhile the idea is a good one, and we have machinery quite sufficient for the broad purpose in view to throw open the Indian service in honest reality to the mass of the community, and effect the deposition of the tyrant King Cram.

MRS. FRANK.

MRS. FRANK. That was just her name; nothing more. But whether it was Mrs. Frank as a Christian name, or Mrs. Frank as a surname, no one knew; and as Miss Cripps, the Mentham milliner and post-mistress, said to Mrs. Barnes, the rector's wife, "It was a particularly awkward thing not to know which it was when you came to think of it."

As little was known of her old home or

belongings as of her legal patronymic. If she had come from the clouds she could not have dropped into Mentham and Fairview more suddenly, or with more mysterious aptness.

"It was to be supposed," said Miss Cripps, representing public opinion on the matter, "that Squire Tapp, the owner of Fairview, was satisfied. But if he was, no one else was; and he should have considered his neighbours' feelings."

Indeed, public opinion in Mentham ran quite high against Mr. Tapp; and the Menthamites were disposed to resent it as a personal affront that he should have let one of their prettiest places to a stranger with no more sponsorship than had this monosyllabic Mrs. Frank. What did he know of her? they asked indignantly of each other. Nothing, absolutely nothing; and to know nothing was equivalent to knowing—everything.

Mrs. Frank was young and pretty; two grave offences in a society composed mainly of unmarried ladies of a certain age, with a couple of disappointing bachelors in leash. Young, pretty, alone, reserved, unhappy, and not too rich, the Menthamites were convinced she was no good; and that if every one had his or her due, and moral obliquities were punished like legal ones, she would be somewhere now in a mob-cap and a grey woollen dress, picking oakum behind a grating. The only person in the place who expressed his firm belief in her respectability was Mr. Graves, the surgeon. But then Mr. Graves was an odd man; not accounted quite sound in his theological views, and vaguely suspected of an amount of liberalism—it was called by another name in Miss Cripps's back parlour—which, if Mentham could have verified its suspicions, would have made Mr. Graves look elsewhere for patients than among its safe and orthodox homesteads. So that his advocacy did the new-comer little or no good, and was even regarded as one suspicious circumstance the more. For, you see, he was not an old inhabitant, like Squire Tapp or Mr. Lumley, the two disappointing bachelors who had held the female world of Mentham in divided allegiance for all these years; but comparatively a new-comer, and not well known even now, though he had been some four years in the place, and had had every family more or less through his hands in the time. And when it was remarked that Mr. Graves and Mrs. Frank soon became exceedingly intimate, and that the reserved, harsh-voiced surgeon spent a

good deal of his spare time at the pretty little woman's, Mentham assumed an attitude of indignant reprobation; and if there had been another M.R.C.S. within hailing distance, John Graves would have had but a barren time of it here.

Indeed, there was talk of some public kind of protest, and the rector was gravely exercised in his mind as to the propriety of allowing the new-comer to stay with the rest on sacrament Sunday; but he took counsel of the rural dean, and so was fain to content himself by a scorching sermon, which, supposing that Mrs. Frank were really all she was held to be, would scathe her pretty sharply. She bore the test, however, without any public self-betrayal; and the Menthamites wondered, when they came out, whether it was innocence or hardened indifference that had carried her through.

It was a still summer's evening when Mrs. Frank and John Graves were walking by the river-side. A hundred yards or so below sat Miss Cripps, snugly ensconced within her arbour—half an old boat set up on end; and sound on such an evening travels far with the stream.

"I cannot, John. I would do anything you told me, as you know; but this is too hard," said the woman's soft voice, in a piteous kind of entreaty.

"You must, Aline. What is the use of me if you will not let me guide you?" was his reply, made sternly.

"Well, I'm sure," said Miss Cripps, with her sharp nose in the air. "They have not lost *their* time at all events. 'John' and 'Aline,' indeed; and she not here six weeks, the minx!"

"But such a terrible step!" said Mrs. Frank.

"It is for your own good," answered her companion. "If you refuse, you know what I can do, Aline; and in your interests—mark, in your interests, child—what I will do."

He spoke strongly, harshly, and so far seemed to have overborne Mrs. Frank, for she did not answer him for some moments. Then she said: "When is he coming, John?" And Miss Cripps fancied there were tears in the soft voice.

"To-morrow."

"To-morrow! Oh, John! dear John!"

"Aline, you must be brave! All depends on your firmness and courage."

"And I have so little of either, and you and he so much!" she said, sighingly.

"Why do you couple us together?" said

Mr. Graves, angrily. "You know I have repudiated him. To-morrow is the last time I will ever see him, and the last time you shall ever see him too."

"Ah, John! it is all very well for you to be so stern; you are not a woman—you cannot tell what I feel!" said Mrs. Frank.

"I am not a woman, as you say, child, but I can understand what you must feel at your association, remote as it is now, with such an unredeemed villain as he is!" answered John Graves, with that hard and vicious kind of coolness which betrays so much in a man.

"No, no! not that—more weak than wicked," she pleaded.

"I don't think Lacy Manners thinks so," said Mr. Graves, the surgeon, grimly.

And then Miss Cripps heard the unmistakable sound of sobbing, with a confused kind of whispering, as if he were trying to comfort her, as the two retraced their steps and went back towards Fairview.

"I thought there was something bad about her from the first," said Miss Cripps, triumphantly; "and now I've found her out! As for that Mr. Graves, *he's* past praying for, and I always thought so. I only hope the poor-law guardians will hear of it, and put another man in his place, the serpent! And to think of her being such a minx—oh, the bad, brazen creature!"

The next morning Miss Cripps was stirring betimes, and watching carefully. The omnibus that ran between Mentham and Heaton railway station went past her house, bringing the mail-bags among other things, and sometimes passengers who became her lodgers; and sometimes boxes of millinery for her own use in trade. To-day it brought the bags, as usual, and two boxes of the sweetest trumpery Heaton could produce; but of the three gentlemen travelling outside, never a lodger for her, though she felt convinced that, wrapped in the coat of one of them, sat Mrs. Frank's secret. Which was it? There was no mark by which He could be distinguished—this mysterious He who was so sternly reprobated by John Graves, so tenderly bewailed by Mrs. Frank, and who was to come to-day to be discarded for ever after. One was a fat, red-faced man, who looked like a cattle-dealer; another was dark-haired, smooth-shaven, one who wore his hat jauntily, had a showy scarf, a huge breast-pin, and a loud style of dress generally, and who had the appearance of a low-class actor; and the third was a fair-haired, boyish-looking fellow, like a mother's

pet or a sister's darling—a careless, loose-lipped kind of man, who might have been only eighteen or twenty years old, so little of the results of experience did he carry on his face, and so boyish and facile was the type.

Miss Cripps decided on the dark-haired man in the middle. He was the most disreputable-looking of the lot; and as she was sure that all about Mrs. Frank was disreputable, this was the one she chose as the partner in the mysterious drama playing out at Fairview. She raised her eyes to him severely. She meant virtue, and she looked it. But the actor gave her a wink that sent her into her shop as if she had been shot; and the omnibus rumbled on bearing the Mystery unsolved to his destination.

"Like the impudence of those men," she said, as she turned to stamp and sort her letters; "and I'll let Mrs. Frank know what I think of her for bringing such stuff as that to Mentham."

Miss Cripps was wrong. Not the smooth-shaven, loudly-dressed man, but the fair-haired, youthful fellow asked his way to Fairview, with a careless tone and a kind of lounging, slippery grace that seemed to mark a not too solid nature; and, guided by the ostler of the George and Dragon, a few moments brought him to the iron gates that shut in the gardens of pretty Mrs. Frank's pleasant home.

Mrs. Frank was in the drawing-room as the stranger passed in. John Graves, the surgeon, was with her. As she heard the light swift step on the gravel she started up, and her face broke out into a trembling, plaintive kind of love more pathetic than tears; but her companion laid his hand on her arm and checked her sternly.

"None of that, Aline," he said. "Are you going to throw away your advantage?"

Mrs. Frank sat down again, and buried her face in her hands.

"It is hard," she murmured, while the surgeon looked at her with an expression in his eyes it was well she did not see. It would have told her something more than she knew already if she had seen it, and something it were, perhaps, better for her and him should be unknown.

Then the door opened, and the maid ushered in "Mr. Smith."

The stranger went up to the pair sitting side by side against the table, like two assessors of judgment, and offered his hand.

"No, sir," said John Graves, sternly, "I do not shake hands with rogues."

The young man's fair face flushed. "As you will," he answered, half carelessly, half defiantly. "I will try to survive the infliction." He turned to the lady. "And you, Aline?" he said, in a different tone, a tone tender, musical, appealing; "do you, too, refuse to shake hands with me?"

She looked down, her eyes filling with tears.

"Your silence is an answer," said very gently the man the servant had called Mr. Smith. "Perhaps I have deserved it, Aline, but it is bad to bear all the same. I have always loved you, always been true to you, and were our places changed at this moment it is not I who would refuse to touch your hand, were it loaded with ten times the amount of dirt there is on mine."

"I know that, Frank," said Aline, softly, and she laid her hand in his.

"This is not the time for false sentiment," put in John Graves, in a harsh voice. "While you have paltered and prated of love, forsooth, see to what you have reduced her and yourself by your villainy. It was always the way with you, Frank, to talk like a hero and to act like a blackguard; and talking satisfied you."

"And it was always your way, Jack, to be hard on me and every other poor devil who chanced to make a slip," answered Frank, with that nonchalant grace which evidently irritated the surgeon. "But I want to speak to Aline, not to you, and it is her decision I have come for, not yours."

"Hers is the same as mine; separation final and irrevocable," said Mr. Graves; "the total obliteration of your very name, of your whole existence. When you leave this house you leave behind you all you ever held—both a brother and a wife. If you do not consent to this, then neither do I consent to be your shield any longer; and the law—and Lacy Manners—may do their worst."

"Is it so, Aline?" asked Frank, leaning nearer to her. She was weeping bitterly, and made no answer.

"Speak, Aline," cried John Graves, grasping her arm. "I too have some right to be consulted."

"I must," sobbed Aline. "You yourself, Frank, have separated us. You have put it out of my power to help you any more."

"And to love me, Aline?" asked the man's tender caressing voice.

"And to love you," echoed John Graves, sternly.

She clasped her hands over her eyes, the tears forcing their way through her fingers.

"I take only her word for that," said Frank, turning with a quick flush and a dark look to his brother. "In this at least you have no part! Tell me, Aline," and his voice trembled, "have you ceased to love me?"

The surgeon, who had never removed his hand from her arm, here gripped it so hardly that she blenched with pain; but she looked up into his, not her husband's, face, and answered steadily:

"No, no! I can never do that, Frank! I love you as I have always loved you, as I always must love you. Am I not your wife?"

"Yes, Aline, for better, for worse. So at least you said. But vows don't count for much, I find, when the current sets the wrong way."

"If you would use the short time before you in business, not in sickly schoolboy sentiment, it would be more to the purpose," said Mr. Graves, with his assessor manner. "If your love had been the love of a man, and not of a fool—and a vicious fool too—you would never have brought your wife into this pass. If you had not respected yourself you might at least have cared for your name and for hers. It sickens me to hear all this absurdity of love when you have reduced her to what she is—the wife of a——"

"Hush, hush, John!" cried Aline, placing her hand over his mouth. "You must not say the word—the thing is bad enough!"

"Always the way with women!" muttered the surgeon, contemptuously. "The word worse than the thing!"

"Thank you, Aline," said Frank. And for the first time their eyes met. She coloured violently, then grew pale and white, and turned her eyes away as if she had done wrong; but his fastened themselves on hers with as much pertinacity as tenderness, following her face as it drooped aside, as if he was exerting some kind of power over her.

At that moment the servant rushed into the room.

"If you please, Mr. Graves, sir," she said, breathlessly, "you are sent for at once to the rectory. Mrs. Barnes"—she was the rector's wife—"is in a fit, and they don't think she has a moment to live. The rector's own horse is here."

John Graves, never the meekest of men, rose from his place with an imprecation.

"Lost!" he said, between his clenched teeth. "But I will make one effort more! I will be back in a few moments," he said to Aline; "and I shall find you here, sir," to Frank, sternly enough. Then to both, "Remember the duty before you, and the only terms on which my protection will be granted."

On which he went out, and the strangely positioned pair sitting there, so near yet so far off, seemed to breathe more freely when he had left.

As the garden gate swung to, and they heard the horse's hoofs thundering down the road, Frank rose from his seat and went over to Aline. He flung himself on his knees by her, and laid his head on her shoulder with the caressing gesture of the old fond love days so long ago now.

"Ah, you have made me so happy in the midst of all my misery," he said, tenderly. "You love me still, Aline!"

"How can I help it, Frank? I could not if I tried," she answered, simply.

"Yet you are going to renounce me for ever? You, my wife! going to separate yourself from my very name, from all the past, and all the hope of the future?"

"It is not I, dear, it is you who have made our life together impossible," she cried.

"Nothing is impossible to love, Aline," Frank answered.

"Oh, do not say that! You know I love you—love you," she repeated, "and that I am forced to leave you for ever."

"I know that you need not if you do not wish it," said Frank. "I know that you are merely obeying the cruel will of a man who, though my brother, has been my enemy all my life; that you have let him come between us; and that in his jealousy of me he does not mind making us miserable, and forcing you to commit a sin."

"Jealousy?" echoed Aline.

"Why, Aline," remonstrated Frank, "you cannot pretend to be ignorant of the fact that John is in love with you—has always been in love with you! Get me out of the way; kill me with grief and despair—and there you are! To be sure you are his sister-in-law, but the world will not know that: and your marriage, if illegal, will not be questioned. And you would try to make me believe you do not foresee all this—you, clever and shrewd as you are?"

"You are wrong, Frank! indeed you are!" said Aline, earnestly. "John is my brother and best friend, no more."

He smiled quite pleasantly, being a man of as little malice as earnestness. "A convenient kind of friend if the husband could be got rid of," he said, as if it in no wise concerned himself. And Aline, in spite of herself, lowered her eyes, and trembled under his.

"Come into the garden," then said Frank, caressingly; "we have sweeter associations there than in a stifling room like this. Do you remember when we used to walk in the garden at Redhill? Aline, can you forget those days? I cannot!"

Aline shivered. "Oh, that I had never known anything but those days of love and trust!" she cried, passionately.

"You have only to will it, Aline, wife! love! and they will come again, never to be interrupted," said Frank, as he drew her hand within his arm, and led her tenderly into the garden; and Aline, yielding to his fascination, as if she had been a girl not wholly wooed, went to what end she knew would come. She had always been in love with her handsome, slippery, good-for-nothing husband; and she was a woman who only felt and never reasoned. Love was her sole logic; and what she hoped that she believed in.

Here John Graves found them, when he came back from the rectory, sitting, lover-like, under the shadow of the horse-chestnut in the shrubbery; and at a glance he saw the ground he had lost and the way Frank had made. The love of a naturally yielding woman for a man with rare powers of persuasion was stronger than all the dictates of prudence or even gratitude; and he felt that his work of strengthening and hardening had to be done over again; if, indeed, it ever could now be done over again! He had it at heart to save her from his brother; not because he was "in love" with her in any paltry sense, but because he loved her, and because he thought his brother unworthy of her. She was his cousin, and he had been left her guardian and trustee under her father's will; and he had always blamed himself that this marriage with handsome, scampish Frank had been the upshot of the intimacy that had followed. So that he felt it in a manner a sacred kind of duty he owed her, to protect her now in the best way he could from the consequences of her own folly, and to break the marriage which his brother's crime had rendered dishonouring. He did not ask if he would give her pain, he only knew

he should keep her safe. And the end justified the means, he thought.

The pair, sitting in the shadow of the chestnut-tree, started like a couple of surreptitious lovers surprised, as John Graves strode up to them; but they said nothing to turn him from his purpose, when he repeated again what he had said before, that they must part now, and for ever. On the contrary, Frank expressed himself resigned to the inevitable; and Aline, never once raising her eyes, looking neither to her husband nor her brother-in-law, and speaking as if in a dream, seemed scarcely to know what she said, when she merely repeated after Frank, "If it must be, John, it must." But John Graves, who knew every turn of her face, had his own uneasy doubts, and felt there was more behind than came to the front.

"I wish she had looked at him or me, that she had either cried or remonstrated," he said to himself, uneasily; and yet he could not tell what it was he feared. For when the omnibus went back to Heaton, Frank went back with it; and on his way to the inn, where John took the precaution to see him safe, he swore a solemn oath that he would never trouble his brother more, nor reappear in England now that he was set afloat in the world again, his forgery bought up, his debts paid, and a certain sum of money in his pocket wherewith to begin life anew in the New World. So John Graves went about his day's business with a lighter heart, or rather with a heart that strove to be light, when the omnibus had fairly started, carrying his brother Frank, with all his mistakes and perplexities, away from Mentham, and from Aline.

The day wore on, and as evening approached, Aline became more and more nervous. She had been occupied in her room all the day, and the servants had scarcely seen her. Luncheon and dinner both had been sent away untouched; and the little household gossiped, as households will, whether big or little. For, indeed, it had been an eventful day for the quiet order of Fairview, and the mystery that surrounded Mrs. Frank had never seemed so mysterious as now, when it had crossed the threshold of her home in bodily shape.

The day darkened into the evening, and the evening deepened into night. Aline sat by the drawing-room window, which opened on to the lawn, looking into the darkness, and listening. The servants were in bed, and the last few lights across

the water had long been extinguished. Suddenly she heard a step on the gravel—a light, swift, yet cautious step; and a man's figure crossed the dark lawn. It came nearer, and Frank's tender voice whispered her name. In an instant she was in his arms.

"Oh, love! love! what it is making me do!" she said, half in ecstasy, half in despair, as her head sunk on his shoulder, and her hot tears rained fast.

"Repenting already, my Aline?"

"No, no Frank! Repent of being with you?" and her arms tightened round his neck. "Only sorry for John—that I am deceiving him after all his goodness to me!"

"We will forget the past, dear," said Frank, hastily. "If you are deceiving your cousin, is it not to protect and be with your husband?"

"Ah, I cannot live without you Frank!" she murmured, passionately; "for I love you."

"You shall not regret it, Aline," Frank said, with a husky voice. "In a country where we are not known, and under another name, I shall have a fresh start, and this time you shall not be ashamed of me. I am not bad all through, Aline."

"I know that, darling. I have always said so."

"God bless you, wife! and you have said true," he answered, kissing her. "Only trust in me this once again. Love me, and do not leave me, and all will be well."

"I do love you, and I will trust you and never leave you," she said solemnly.

And with this she came out into the darkness; and the two, hand-in-hand together, passed through the gate, and took the road that led through Mentham and away to the west; John Graves stirring restlessly in his troubled sleep as the sound of a carriage, driving at hot speed, dashed over the village stones.

The next morning all Mentham was astir with the news that Mrs. Frank of Fairview was missing. No one knew where she had gone or what she had done; whether she had run off with a lover or run away from her creditors; some said she had probably drowned herself in the river in despair at her sins, whatever they might be. All that was sure, however, was just this—she had gone, and no one ever knew more. She was held to have committed some grievous crime; and

the only man who could have cleared her name kept silent, and told no one how that she had eloped with her own husband, a swindler, a forger, whose public prosecution and disgrace he, John Graves, his brother, had bought off with all his savings. If he had but known, however, that he was going to make this return, he would have given him over to the consequences of his crime. As it was—let them go! She was weak and he was wicked; though it broke his heart to lose her, and lose her thus—let them go! In the future years, when she had learnt for the second time the miserable mistake she had made, she would come to him again, and he—he would love her and shelter and protect her as before. So he turned to his life's work again, harder, sadder, more reticent than ever; but always looking out towards the west for the return of the woman he loved, whose happiness he believed his brother had destroyed, and whose happiness he, John Graves, would give his life to build up again.

But they never met. Years after, a staid and naturalised citizen of Boston, who, some did say, was a reformed rake with a history at his back that would not bear repeating, and a matron still beautiful and loving, read in an English newspaper the death of one John Graves at Mentham; and in the same paper they read a lawyer's advertisement for "Aline, wife of Frank Graves," who, if living, would inherit her cousin's property. If she was dead it was to go to a charity.

"My enemy to the last. Poor old Jack!" said Frank, as he put down the paper with a sigh; and Aline, laying her hand on his, looked into his eyes tenderly, her own filled with tears, and said:

"I did right, Frank! I saved one life, if I saddened another and deceived my true friend. But I saved the one which was most precious, and I kept faith with the dearest love!"

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